



Testimony in Support of H.B. 5033, An Act Addressing the Needs of Food-Insecure Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is David Acquaaah-Mensah and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for H.B. 5033, an Act addressing the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. This bill would require public institutions of higher education to assess and address food insecurity among students and to increase access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for eligible students at institutions of higher education.

Black and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. A study done by the University of Connecticut estimated that around 35% of Connecticut college students suffer from food insecurities. Amongst these alarming statistics, black students constitute fifty-eight percent, which is 19% higher than the overall rate for students identifying as White or Caucasian. Students experiencing food insecurity have a lower average GPA and higher rates of depression and nutrition deficiencies.

As I'm sure you are all aware, Connecticut is not the only state considering this brand of legislation. On the state level, the Hunger-Free Campus Acts have been implemented in Massachusetts, Minnesota, Maryland, New Jersey, and California. These Hunger-Free Campus Acts are remarkably similar to H.B. 5033 in its current form. They started Swipe Out Hunger programs, created SNAP enrollment opportunities, established food pantries, and etc. In California, these initiatives have helped 2.7 million students. If neighboring states can take the time to address these issues, then there's no reason for Connecticut to fall behind.

In conclusion, I urge you to address the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. The consequences of food insecurity impact their ability to perform well in and out of school and have a life-long impact on their development and livelihood. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Higher Education Committee so that these individuals have a chance at fulfilling their best potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

David Acquaaah-Mensah
New Haven, CT